

CHAPTER X

MATERIALIZATIONS AND "KATIE KING"

FROM whatever point of view we regard it, the materialization of a solid human form must be accounted the most inexplicable of all spiritualistic phenomenon. A mere phantom, which amounts to no more than an illusion of the sense of sight even if it be perceived by many persons simultaneously, is not so overwhelming. But the appearance of a clothed figure which cannot only be seen, but felt and clasped and weighed, which converses in a natural human voice, and returns intelligent answers to questions, seems to strain a sober man's capacity for belief almost to breaking point. It is, in fact, a kind of creation. And did not our Lord Himself make appeal to the test of solidity: "See My hands and feet that it is I Myself; handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have" (Luke xxiv. 39).

Although we do not hear much of materializations in the early years of the spiritualistic movement — there is little, for example, to be found in the works of Capron, Spicer, Hare, and Judge Edmonds — still this type of phenomenon seems to have been occasionally presented even from the beginning. Adin Ballou in his book *Spirit Manifestations* (Boston: 1852, p. 8) devotes a special section in his enumeration to "apparitions in some instances of a spirit hand and arm; in others of the whole human form; and in others of several deceased persons conversing together, causing distinct touches to be felt by the mortal living; grasping and shaking their hands and giving many other sensible demon-

strations of their existence." In the accounts preserved of Home's early séances in London (1855) there are many references to spirit hands and arms clearly seen and also felt, some of them being the tiny hands of children which from their size could not possibly have been the flesh and blood hands of the medium or of any confederate. For full form manifestations the earliest to attract any considerable amount of attention were probably those produced under the mediumship of Miss Kate Fox in her sittings with Mr. C. F. Livermore, a New York banker of recognized integrity. Mr. Livermore was not, as one might suspect, a septuagenarian in his dotage, but a practical business man under forty, who had become interested in the subject owing to the death of his dearly loved wife Estelle. The sittings, which began in 1861, and were continued for four or five years, were recorded in Mr. Livermore's diary. In one of the early manifestations we learn that, the figure of his wife appearing,

"I asked her to kiss me if she could; and to my great astonishment and delight, an arm was placed around my neck, and a real palpable kiss was imprinted on my lips, through something like fine muslin. A head was laid upon mine, the hair falling luxuriantly down my face. The kiss was frequently repeated, and was audible in every part of the room. . . . The figure at the close stood before the mirror and was reflected therein."

At a later stage in this series of sittings the spirit of Dr. Benjamin Franklin also materialized, "broad-shouldered, heavy and dressed in black," and on October 4, 1861, Mr. Livermore records how among many other manifestations, "the spirits of my wife and Dr. Franklin came to me in form at the same time — he slapping me heavily upon the back, while she gently patted me upon the head and shoulder." This simultaneous appearance seems to exclude all possibility of personation on the part of the medium. On another occasion his wife came "with the arm bare from the shoulder

with the exception of the gossamer. I found it," he goes on, "as large and as real in weight as a living arm. At first it felt cold, then grew gradually warmer." On January 30, 1862, he records that the figure of his wife "kissed me, rested its arm, while fully visible, upon my head and shoulders, repeating the same to the medium." Were these, one is tempted to ask, real experiences, or were they only the maundering of a man beside himself with grief who had fallen under the hypnotic spell of an artful little hussy, such as many will suspect Miss Kate Fox to have been? It is only fair to say that there was some corroboration, notably that of Dr. John F. Gray, who, though himself a spiritualist, seems to have been a respected physician in good practice. Dr. Gray attests that he was present at some of these manifestations, and so also was a Mr. Groute, who was Livermore's brother-in-law.¹

Mr. Livermore does not seem to have gone back upon his conviction of the genuineness of the materialization he had witnessed, for some years later, on July 26, 1871, we find him writing in the following terms to the Hon. Robert Dale Owen, who prints the letter in his book, *The Debatable Land*:

"My Esteemed Friend:

"I cannot refuse your request for particulars of some of these ex-

¹I have taken this account of Mr. C. Livermore's experiences mainly from the book of Mr. Epes Sargent, *Planchette, or the Despair of Science* (Boston: 1869), pp. 55-79. But Mr. Epes Sargent's summary is borne out in all respects by the contemporary descriptions of Mr. B. Coleman, an Englishman of good social position, who wrote from New York after holding many conversations with Mr. Livermore and Dr. Gray and after receiving many letters from the former, from which he quotes at length (see *The Spiritual Magazine* for 1861, pp. 385-400, and 481-498). Moreover, another full account of the same phenomena is given by the Hon. Robert Dale Owen, formerly the diplomatic representative of the United States at the court of the King of Naples, in his *Debatable Land*, pp. 385-401. Some interesting comments, on the Livermore manifestations will be found in M. J. Williamson's book, *Modern Diabolism* (1873), pp. 384-399.

periences which I have read to you from my Journal of 1861-1866. In giving them, I desire, by way of averting misconception, to make a few explanations.

"I commenced these investigations an out-and-out sceptic. They were undertaken solely with a view to satisfy my own mind, and with no thought or desire for publicity. After a thorough and careful scrutiny, I found, to my surprise, that the phenomena were real. After ten years of experience, with ample opportunities for observation (often with scientific men), I arrive at these conclusions:

"First, that there exists, in presence of certain sensitives of high nervous organization, a mysterious force, capable of moving ponderable bodies, and which exhibits intelligence: For example, a pencil without contact with human hand, or any visible agency, apparently of its own volition, writes intelligently and answers questions pertinently.

"Second, that temporary formations, material in structure and cognizable by the senses, are produced by the same influence, are animated by the same mysterious force, and pass off as incomprehensibly as they came. For example, hands which grasp with living power; flowers which emit perfume and can be handled; human forms and parts of forms; recognizable faces; representations of clothing, and the like.

"Third, that this force, and the resulting phenomena, are developed in a greater or less degree, according to the physical and mental conditions of the sensitive, and, in a measure, by atmospherical conditions.

"Fourth, that the intelligence which governs this force is (under pure conditions) independent of, and external to, the minds of the sensitive and investigator. For example, questions unknown to either, sometimes in language unknown to either, are duly answered.

"The origin of these phenomena is an open question.

"You may rely on these records as being free from exaggeration in each and every particular. Very sincerely your friend,

C. F. Livermore."

This certainly reads like the letter of a sane and sober-minded investigator; but we know little of Mr. Livermore, and we must pass on to the experiences of a famous man of science which, extraordinary as they may seem, are corroborated by a quite remarkable number of other responsible observers.

In the paper which the late Sir William F. Barrett, F.R.S., read before the Society for Psychical Research in 1920, as a tribute to the memory of his friend Sir William Crookes, he made special reference to the materializations of the *soi-disant*, "Katie King," which Crookes had investigated in 1874, and vouched for as authentic. The attitude of the writer himself was an extremely cautious one:

"One hesitates," says Sir William Barrett, "to express any opinion on these apparently incredible phenomena. They are unique in the records of psychical research. No such startling demonstration, under stringent conditions, of what seemed to be a perfectly natural human form, yet able to appear and disappear, had ever been observed before. . . . Crookes, we must remember, was one of the most exact and accomplished investigators the world has known. He was not suffering during his spiritualistic experiments from any mental failure, for he was concurrently conducting other scientific work of great value, work that has never been impugned. The hallucination theory Lord Rayleigh and Count Solovovo have discredited."²

Still one carries away the impression that the writer is not satisfied, and I afterwards learned from Sir William Barrett himself that such was in fact the case. On the other hand, M. Charles Richet, the famous Professor of Physiology in the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, despite his pronounced materialism, has made it clear in his *Traité de Métapsychique* that he regards Crookes's experiences as decisive and that he accepts his statement of the facts without reserve.³ To writers of the temper of Messrs. Edward Clodd, Joseph McCabe, I. L. Tuckett, etc., the whole story, of course, stands self-condemned as the very climax of absurdity, calling for no serious refutation.

But before we can go further, we need to have Sir William Crookes's allegations before us. His own account of the phenomena is somewhat too lengthy to reproduce in full, but I

²*Proceedings of the S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 26-27.

³Richet, *Métapsychique* (1922), 630-633; and cf. pp. 588, 595 and 565.

may quote Mr. Frank Podmore's summary, feeling that in this way no injustice will be done to the contentions of the sceptical argument. Mr. Podmore is not likely to put the case too strongly against himself.

Neglecting, then, all preliminary history, we learn that on December 9, 1873, at one of the séances given by Miss Florrie Cook, who could not exactly be regarded as a paid medium,⁴ a figure which came outside the cabinet within which the medium was believed to lie entranced was seized by one of the spectators. The form, purporting to be that of one "Katie King," struggled in his grasp, and, with the assistance of other spiritualists present, regained the cabinet. The assailant affirmed his conviction that the figure was that of the medium herself masquerading as "Katie King," but there was no conclusive proof of this, and a controversy followed which was carried on with considerable acrimony in the *Times* and in most of the spiritualistic journals of the period. Thereupon, as Mr. Podmore proceeds to relate:

"Mr. Crookes, as one who had tested and satisfied himself of the genuineness of the materializations exhibited in Miss Cook's presence, felt bound to intervene. In his first letter the only proof offered, beyond the assertion of his own conviction, of the independent existence of the spirit form was that on one occasion, in the house of Mr. Luxmoore, when "Katie" was standing before him in the room, Mr. Crookes had distinctly heard, from behind the curtain, the sobbing and moaning habitually made by Miss Cook during such séances."⁵

"The evidence, no doubt, left something to be desired, and in two

⁴As may be ascertained from a letter to the *Times* for April 11, 1874, a Mr. Charles Blackburn, a Manchester gentleman of some wealth, had "made a little arrangement of compensation" with Miss Cook's family which secured her services for certain séances and relieved her of the need of taking fees from strangers.

⁵This sobbing and moaning of the medium in the cabinet while "Katie" was manifesting in the light, is attested by others, notably by Mr. C. Varley, F.R.S. See *The Spiritualist*, March 20, 1874, p. 135. On this occasion, a rigorous electrical test was applied, proving, so it was alleged, that the medium never moved from her place in the dark. — H. T.

later letters Mr. Crookes essayed to supply the deficiency. At a séance at his own house on March 12th, 1874, 'Katie,' robed in white, came to the opening of the curtain and summoned him to the assistance of her medium. Mr. Crookes followed 'immediately'⁶ and found Miss Cook, clad in her ordinary black velvet dress, lying across the sofa. But 'Katie' had vanished and he did not actually see the two forms together. Nor did he apparently ever succeed in seeing the *faces* of 'Katie' and Miss Cook simultaneously in his own house. Later, however, he claims to have seen their forms together, in a good light. Miss Cook gave a series of sittings in May of this year (1874) at Mr. Crookes's house for the purpose of allowing 'Katie' to be photographed. The sittings took place by electric light, and five cameras were at work simultaneously. Miss Cook would lie down on the floor behind a curtain with her face muffled in a shawl and 'Katie,' when ready, would appear in the full light in front of the curtain. Mr. Crookes adds: I frequently drew the curtain on one side when Katie was standing near, and it was a common thing for the seven or eight of us to see Miss Cook and Katie at the same time under the full blaze of the electric light.⁷ We did not on these occasions actually see the face of the medium, because of the shawl, but we saw her hands and feet; we saw her move uneasily under the influence of the intense light, and we heard her moan occasionally. I have one photograph of the two together, but Katie is seated in front of Miss Cook's head.⁸

Mr. Podmore goes on to object that even here full proof is wanting. "Apparently," he says, "all that Mr. Crookes and his fellow observers actually *saw*, besides the figure of 'Katie,' was a bundle of clothes on the floor, with a shawl at one

⁶Mr. Crookes states positively: "Not more than three seconds elapsed between my seeing the white-robed Katie standing before me and my raising Miss Cook on to the sofa from the position into which she had fallen." Seeing that Katie wore a white dress and was barefoot and that Miss Cook was dressed in black velvet with boots, this transformation seems to exceed the capacity of any quick-change artist, and the audacity of the appeal for help was in any case astounding, if the manifestations were fraudulent. — H. T.

⁷This is confirmed by Mr. Dawson Rogers, who was present. See *Katie King, Histoire de ses Apparitions*, par "Un Adepte," p. 92. H. T.

⁸Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II, p. 152. The letters of Crookes here cited will be found in the *Spiritualist* for 1874, I, pp. 71, 157-158, 270-271.

end, a pair of boots at the other, and something like hands attached to it." Mr. Podmore's tone is such as to suggest that Mr. Crookes was not alive to the possibility that the figure of the medium lying on the floor might have been a dummy. The insinuation, if it was so intended, was quite unwarranted. Not only has the critic ignored the statement, which he himself quotes that "we saw her [the medium] move uneasily under the influence of the intense light," but he has also overlooked a letter of Mr. Crookes addressed at the time to Mr. H. Cholmondeley Pennell. Nearly *two months before* the publication of the description just quoted of the photographing of "Katie" in Mr. Crookes's laboratory, Mr. Pennell communicated to *The Spiritualist* (April 10, 1874, p. 179) a letter he had just received from Mr. Crookes to the following effect:

"At the time of the occurrence [obviously the second séance described in his letter to the *Spiritualist*, printed on April 3] I felt its importance too much to neglect any test which I thought would be likely to add to its completeness. As I held one of Miss Cook's hands all the time and knelt by her, held the light close to her face, and *watched her breathing*,⁹ I have abundant reason to know that I was not deceived by a lay figure or by a bundle of clothes. As regards the identity of Katie, I have the same positive conviction. Height, figure, features, complexion, dress and pleasant smile of recognition, were all the same as I have seen there dozens of times; and as I have repeatedly stood for many minutes within a few inches of her face, in a good light, Katie's appearance is to me as familiar as is that of Miss Cook herself."

Now the point upon which I desire to insist is this, that even were we to suppose that Mr. Crookes was exaggerating his own alertness on the occasion referred to, the suggestion had evidently been made by Mr. Pennell or someone else that he had mistaken a bundle of clothes for the body of the medium. This possibility had therefore been pressed upon

⁹Italics mine.

Crookes's notice at least as early as April 10. But the photographing of "Katie" in the laboratory took place in May,¹⁰ and it is, to my thinking, inconceivable, after the dummy suggestion had been thus publicly ventilated, that either Mr. Crookes and his assistants could have neglected to take precautions against so obvious a trick, or that Miss Cook herself could have had the audacity to persist in the imposture despite the imminent danger of detection.¹¹ In any case, Mr. Podmore's statement that Crookes and his fellow observers made no claim to have *seen* more than the form of the medium is in contradiction with the facts. At Hackney, Mr. Crookes asserts that he watched the medium's breathing; in his own house he declares that the figure "moved uneasily" in the glare of the electric light.

In the face of his own most explicit statements it certainly cannot be maintained that Mr. Crookes reached his conclusions hastily. Writing to Mr. Serjeant Cox on April 14, 1874, he declared that he had had "between thirty and forty sésances with Miss Cook before I felt justified in coming to a positive opinion."¹² Without disputing a considerable resemblance of feature between Katie King and her medium he also lays stress upon certain very positive differences. For example, he writes:

"Katie's height varies; in my house I have seen her six inches taller than Miss Cook. Last night (at Hackney), with bare feet and not 'tip-toeing,' she was four and a half inches taller than Miss Cook. Katie's neck was bare last night; the skin was perfectly smooth both to touch and sight, while on Miss Cook's neck is a large blister, which

¹⁰Mr. Crookes explicitly says that the photographs were taken "in the week before Katie took her departure," when "she gave sésances at my house almost nightly." The date of "Katie's" last appearance was May 21, 1874.

¹¹The medium (a girl of seventeen) would have been less than human if she had abstained from reading the many communications devoted to herself in *The Spiritualist*, which a rival editor had nicknamed in derision "Miss Florence Cook's Journal."

under similar circumstances is distinctly visible and rough to the touch. Katie's ears are unpierced, while Miss Cook habitually wears earrings. Katie's complexion is very fair, while that of Miss Cook is very dark. Katie's fingers are much longer than Miss Cook's and her face is also larger. In manners and ways of expression there are also many decided differences."¹³

This letter was written on the 30th of March. Almost two months later, when Mr. Crookes had many times over seen Katie by the electric light in the course of his photographic experiments, he remarks:

"I have the utmost certainty that Miss Cook and Katie are two separate individuals so far as their bodies are concerned. Several little marks on Miss Cook's face are absent on Katie's. Miss Cook's hair is so dark a brown as almost to appear black, Katie's . . . is a rich golden auburn. One evening I timed Katie's pulse. It beat steadily at 75, whilst Miss Cook's pulse, a little time after, was going at its usual rate of 90."¹⁴

Mr. Crookes is speaking here of the observations made in his own laboratory, where, with five cameras at work simultaneously, he obtained altogether forty-four negatives of Katie, "some inferior, some indifferent and some excellent." He also remarks:

"One of the most interesting of the pictures is one in which I am standing by the side of Katie; she has her bare feet upon a particular part of the floor. Afterwards I dressed Miss Cook like Katie, placed her and myself in exactly the same position, and we were photographed by the same cameras, placed exactly as in the other experiment, and illuminated by the same light. When these two pictures are placed over each other, the two photographs of myself coincide exactly as regards stature, etc., but Katie is half a head taller than Miss Cook and looks a big woman in comparison with her. In the breadth of her face, in many of the pictures, she differs essentially in size from her medium, and the photographs show several other points of difference."¹⁵

¹²*The Spiritualist*, April 3, 1874, pp. 157-158.

¹³*Ibid.*, June 5, 1874, p. 271.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

In the critical examination which Mr. Podmore has made of such phenomena as those of Home and Miss Cook, it is unfortunate that he is apt to lay great stress upon occasional flaws in the main evidence, while ignoring almost completely the mass of subsidiary testimony which corroborates the facts in dispute. Sir William Crookes was undoubtedly the principal witness in the Katie King manifestations, but he was by no means the only one. The newspaper called *The Spiritualist*, for 1873 and 1874, contains many independent accounts of Miss Cook's séances contributed by those who were present. The writers, no doubt, were believers in the phenomena, but many of them were well-known men in good position, and there is no reason to doubt their sincerity. The facts which they attest are such as it required no scientific skill to observe. Any child could have observed them. Practically speaking, all the witnesses admit and lay stress upon the great resemblance between Miss Cook and Katie King, although those who attended many séances also state that this resemblance varied in degree. It was sometimes much more noticeable than at others. On the other hand, there is hardly less unanimous testimony to the fact that Katie King was altogether a bigger woman than the medium. She was taller, her figure was fuller, her hands and feet were conspicuously larger and her face was broader. Nearly all the descriptions to which I refer were printed some time before Sir William Crookes had his unrivalled opportunity of comparing the two. As he tells us himself:

"During the last six months Miss Cook has been a frequent visitor at my house, remaining sometimes a week at a time. She brings nothing with her but a little hand-bag, not locked. During the day she is constantly in the presence of Mrs. Crookes, myself or some other member of my family, and, not sleeping by herself, there is absolutely no opportunity for any preparation even of a less elaborate character than would be required for enacting Katie King."¹⁶

¹⁶*The Spiritualist*, June 5, 1874, p. 270.

On the other hand, in the photographic experiments, he and his assistants repeatedly studied Katie's features "in the full blaze of the electric light." When, therefore, Sir William asserts that "Katie is half a head taller than Miss Cook and looks a big woman in comparison with her," it is surely a very important corroboration to find that many months earlier other observers, who had good opportunities for comparing the two, expressed themselves with equal conviction in precisely the same sense. Take, for instance, Mr. G. R. Tapp, who contributes two long letters, one on March 1, 1873, the other on February 6, 1874.¹⁷ Even if his evidence be discounted as that of a spiritualist and a friend of the Cook family, he certainly could not have known what Mr. Crookes was going to write a year and a half later. Yet his testimony on both occasions is in complete accord with the subsequent observations of the famous scientist. Mr. Tapp declares, in March, 1873, that Katie "seemed to be about five feet six inches in height or rather more," whereas the medium was about five feet. He adds: "Her shoulders and waist were broad and solid looking, in fact 'Katie' was rather stout."¹⁸ In his letter of February, 1874, he repeats the statement that Miss Cook, who "is *petite* in figure," was much shorter and more slightly built than Katie. He notes that Katie's hair is "light brown," whereas the medium's is "very dark brown, almost black." Another observer who, like Mr. Tapp, had been present at an immense number of séances with Miss Cook, many of them being held in his own house, was Mr. J. C. Luxmoore, the head of a county family and an active magistrate for Devon. He writes, in March, 1873,

¹⁷Printed in *The Spiritualist* for these respective dates.

¹⁸There can have been no padding, for it was expressly ascertained on this and several other occasions that "Katie" wore only a single white garment without a corset or any underclothing.

that "Katie appeared to me to be quite two, if not three, inches taller than Miss Cook; her feet and hands were bare and much larger than Miss Cook's,"¹⁹ and he mentions incidentally that "Miss Cook's figure happens to be very small." Similarly, W. Oxley in *The Spiritualist* (November 14, 1873) declares that Katie was three or four inches taller, her hands bigger, and her hair much lighter. Again, Mr. B. Coleman, who attended a séance at Mr. Luxmoore's house on November 18, 1873, writing in defense of the theory that the spirit form is the "double" of the medium, declares that Katie "presented the exact features of Miss Cook." He says, too, that "her conversation and her knowledge of persons are the same, and some of the expressions which I heard her utter were, in emphasis and words, exactly those of Miss Cook."²⁰ None the less, he admits that "her height, as I observed by the measurement on that evening, is a couple of inches taller,"²¹ moreover, he notes that her voice, though like the medium's, "is much lower in tone." It would be easy to multiply such testimonies, and I may mention that after a very careful examination of a long series of letters I have come across nothing which conflicts with Mr. Crookes's statements of much later date. One document of special interest is a description by Dr. George Sexton printed in the *Medium and Daybreak*²² and referring to a séance which took place at Mr. Luxmoore's on November 25, 1873.

¹⁹*The Spiritualist*, March 15, 1873, p. 133. He adds "she stamped her foot on the ground to show she was not on tiptoe."

²⁰It is commonly asserted by spiritualists, even by those who do not accept the theory of "doubles," that the materialized form in most cases reproduces the features of the medium. Assuming that materialization is possible at all, this is not unnatural. A child usually resembles one or both of its parents.

²¹*The Spiritual Magazine*, December, 1877, p. 557.

²²For December 12, 1873, p. 587. The importance of this particular letter lies in the fact that it appeared in the *Medium*, which at this date was very hostile to *The Spiritualist* and distinctly adverse to Miss Cook.

Dr. Sexton, who was a convert from materialism, reports that: "Katie showed her feet, which were perfectly naked, and stamped them on the floor to prove that she was not standing on tiptoe, this latter fact being a very important one, seeing that she was at least four inches taller than Miss Cook. Her figure and complexion were also totally unlike those of the medium." Similarly, Dr. Gully protests against the supposition that Katie (who was "three inches taller," had "very much larger hands" and showed light hair while the medium's was black) could be identical with Miss Cook.²³

It is to be noted also that, at Mr. Luxmoore's house, Miss Cook in March, 1874, was controlled by an electrical test which, in the opinion of two such experts as Sir William Crookes, F.R.S., and Cromwell Varley, F.R.S., rendered it impossible for the medium to leave her seat in the cabinet without the fact being immediately betrayed. "Katie," none the less, showed herself, and wrote a note in sight of the observers. In particular Mr. Varley says:

"Towards the close of the séance the room was darkened and Katie allowed me to approach her. She then let me grasp her hand; it was a long one, very cold and clammy. A minute or two afterwards, Katie told me to go into the dark chamber to detrance Miss Cook. I found her in a deep trance, huddled together in her easy chair, her head lying upon her left shoulder, her right hand hanging down. Her hand was small, warm and dry; and not long, cold and clammy, like Katie's."

²³*The Spiritualist*, February 20, 1874, p. 95. With regard to the length of the hands, see also Mr. C. F. Varley, F. R. S., in *The Spiritualist*, March 20, 1874, p. 134; and concerning the figure generally, cf. Prince Wittgenstein in *The Spiritualist*, February 13, 1874, p. 83. Prince Wittgenstein, who was one of the *aide-de-camps* of the Emperor of Russia, in a longer letter addressed to the *Revue Spirite*, grows enthusiastic about Katie's chestnut hair (*cheveux châtain*) visible through her veil. He also says: "One might mistake her seen from a distance for Miss Cook . . . but Miss Cook, though pretty, is much smaller, and her hands are not as large as Katie's." *Katie King, Histoire de ses Apparitions* (Paris: 1879), pp. 51-52. This was written before any of Mr. Crookes's letters had appeared in print.

Mr. Varley and Mr. Crookes also record that while Katie during the séance was moving her wrists about and opening and closing her fingers, "we all distinctly heard Miss Cook moaning like a person in a troubled dream."²⁴ In any case it is difficult to see how in two or three minutes — and the time-chart seems to show that no greater interval was possible — a hand that was cold and clammy could be converted into one that was warm and dry; to say nothing of the alleged difference in size.

From all that has been said, two conclusions, I think, may be drawn without further discussion, first, that the "Katie King," who showed her bare arms and feet, walked about, conversed, sang, stamped her foot, was handled, embraced, had her pulse felt, and was successfully photographed, on two occasions in 1873, and some half dozen times by Mr. Crookes in 1874, was not a mere subjective hallucination of the mind. She had for the time a real independent existence. Secondly, that she was certainly not an automaton or any sort of lay figure. There remain, then, only four possibilities: first, that Katie was simply the medium herself masquerading; second, that she was an accomplice; third, that her part was enacted sometimes by the medium and on other occasions by an accomplice; fourth, that she was, as she purported to be, a materialized spirit form. I must confess that of these alternatives it is the last supposition which seems to me to be the least in conflict with the evidence available.

1. The hypothesis that the whole series of Katie King's appearances was a clever piece of masquerade carried out by Miss Florence Cook, herself, is beset, in my judgment, by insuperable difficulties. I lay no stress upon the respectability of the Cook family or upon the youth and seeming innocence of the medium — she is said at the time to have been

²⁴*The Spiritual Magazine*, April, 1874, pp. 161-165.

only seventeen — in these cases it often happens that *malitia supplet aetatem*. But the definite points of difference in height, complexion, hair, figure, hands, and other details, observed in strong light by Mr. Crookes, and corroborated by other witnesses (no one contradicting) who preceded him in time, cannot be waived aside. It is not as if we were dependent upon a brief glimpse obtained in a single sitting. In his first séances with Miss Cook, Sir William himself tells us that he was unfavourably impressed and inclined to suspect imposture; he only reached conviction after thirty or forty such experiments.²⁵ Moreover, it is impossible to ignore the strong evidence afforded by his photographs, though they have unfortunately never been published. Mr. J. H. Simpson, who had prints of twenty-two of them, declares that they prove that Miss Cook was several inches shorter than Katie, that her hair was both darker and shorter, her complexion darker and her hands smaller — all this being in exact agreement with what the early observers recorded.²⁶

Then we have the tests and control which were employed. In very many of the sittings the medium was secured with tapes, drawn tight around the waist and round her wrists, these tapes being both sewn and sealed and the slack end being secured outside the cabinet. Although any considerable movement under the conditions given would seem to be impossible, and the seals and tapes were almost invariably found intact, I do not wish to build too much upon the security thus afforded against juggler's tricks. But the searching, which nearly always took place when at Mr. Luxmoore's house, was a different matter. The ladies who searched her

²⁵*The Spiritualist*, June 19, 1874; but this letter itself was written on April 14. He had many séances after this.

²⁶J. H. Simpson, *Twenty-two Photographs of the Katie King Series*, a pamphlet published in 1905. In one pair of these two were successively photographed against a fixed measuring tape.

declared that when she came into the cabinet she had nothing white about her. The cabinet was also examined, and there was nothing white there. Still Katie came forth and chatted freely for half an hour or an hour together in a good light, clad to her feet in a full white robe with a head veil and girdle. This was not gossamer or thin muslin, otherwise her whole form would have been visible through it and would have shown in the photographs. The visitors were sometimes allowed to handle the material. One declared it to be "like fine white canvas or bunting,"²⁷ another described it as "strong white calico."²⁸ Garments of this kind cannot be packed in a quill, or in the bones of a corset, or in the hollow heel of a boot.

But perhaps the greatest difficulty of all in the way of supposing that Miss Cook herself masqueraded as Katie is the completeness and suddenness of the disappearance of the latter. To appreciate the strength of this argument one ought to read patiently through the whole series of descriptions — to reproduce them, of course, is impossible here. In order to disappear, Katie would have had to get rid of every trace of her white garments, to put on her stockings and elastic-side boots, to attire herself in her former dress, to rearrange her hair — I say nothing about changing its colour — to replace the earrings in her ears, and to adjust the tapes round her wrists and round her waist without injuring the seals.²⁹ The tapes and seals, it is true, were not used in Crookes's

²⁷*The Spiritualist*, 1873, p. 119.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 453.

²⁹With regard to the instantaneousness of Katie's disappearance the evidence of Mr. B. Coleman (*Spir. Mag.*, 1873, p. 555), of Dr. Sexton (*Medium*, December 12, 1873), of Mr. W. Oxley (*Spiritualist*, November 14, 1873), Prince Wittgenstein (*Spiritualist*, February 13, 1874), and Dr. Gully (*Spiritualist*, February 20, 1874), is most important. The last named says that the interval between the disappearance of Katie and the finding of Miss Cook in her daily dress is "less than one minute, as I have frequently certified by counting."

laboratory. But even without this complication I find it impossible to reconcile any hypothesis involving the identity of the medium and Katie with that scientist's plain statements; for example, with the following:

"For some time past Katie has given me permission to do what I liked — to touch her, and to enter and to leave the cabinet almost whenever I pleased. I have *frequently* [I italicize the word] followed her into the cabinet, and have sometimes seen her and her medium together, but most generally I have found nobody but the entranced medium lying on the floor, Katie and her white robes having instantaneously disappeared."³⁰

I have already called attention in a note to the fact that once, when the medium had slipped off the sofa on which she had been lying, Katie came out in her white dress to summon Mr. Crookes. He declares that not more than three seconds elapsed before he entered his library which served as a dark cabinet, found the medium in a dangerous position, and lifted her entranced and velvet-clad body on to the sofa again. What is more, he states that the white-robed Katie did not precede him into the library, but "stepped aside to allow me to pass." A little later Katie came out again and invited him to bring his phosphorus lamp to look at the medium. Whereupon — "I closely followed her into the library, and by the light of my lamp saw Miss Cook lying on the sofa just as I had left her. I looked round for Katie, but she had disappeared." Can anyone conceivably maintain that the figure lying on the sofa which Mr. Crookes had lifted there a few minutes before was nothing but a dummy?

2. We seem, then, forced to the second hypothesis, that Katie King was not Miss Cook but a confederate who resembled her in feature. A year or two later, in the United States, during a long series of séances held under the mediumship of Mr. and Mrs. Holmes at the instance of Mr. R.

³⁰*The Spiritualist*, June 5, 1874, p. 270.

Dale Owen, this kind of imposture undoubtedly did take place. A sliding panel had been constructed in the side of the cabinet, and when each séance began, a living girl crept through the panel into the dark chamber. She personated "Katie King" successfully for several months until finally the trick was discovered. But the fundamental difference between the two cases was this, that the Holmes's séances took place on their own premises, whereas, in the instance of Miss Cook, many of the best and most successful sittings were held in Mr. Luxmoore's house or in Mr. Crookes's laboratory. By what conceivable arrangement could a confederate penetrate into either establishment just at the moment she was wanted, evading the careful search made of the room used as a cabinet? Moreover, even if she had succeeded in getting in, there remained the still more difficult problem of getting out again when the lights were turned up in the cabinet and Mr. Luxmoore or Mr. Crookes came to look after the medium as she recovered from her trance. Furthermore, the coincidence that the accomplice closely resembled the medium in feature would be an extraordinary one, and, finally, it appears to me certain that if Katie King and Florence Cook had really been two distinct individuals, Mr. Crookes would readily have been allowed to gratify his desire of seeing the faces of both together in a good light.³¹ In the Holmes's séances the two mediums sat in full view outside the cabinet, and all present could look upon the supposed spirit form of Katie without ever losing sight of the mediums. It must also be remembered that the séances at Mr. Luxmoore's, and still more at Mr. Crookes's were very exclusive. No one was admitted who was not personally known to the household.

³¹This he never succeeded in doing in his own house, and only once at Hackney, using, not gas light, but a phosphorus lamp. Graf von Klinckowstroem follows Podmore in maintaining that at Hackney Miss Cook had a confederate who personated "Katie."

3. It is plain from Mr. Podmore's insistence upon the resemblance between "Katie" and Miss Cook³² (he had seen Mr. Crookes's photographs) that he believed the two to be one and the same person as long as séances were held in the laboratory. But it is equally clear that in regard to other séances held at Miss Cook's own home in Hackney, notably on March 29 and on the farewell appearance of May 21, Mr. Podmore was convinced that the two forms were distinct, and that either Katie or the medium was personated by a confederate. I cannot see that this hypothesis helps us much, except that it gives the sceptic an opportunity of confusing the issues when pressed on any particular detail. All the differences which Mr. Crookes noted in his own laboratory between Katie and Miss Cook still stand good. On March 29 and May 21, at Hackney, if it was the *confederate* who personated Katie, then we have to suppose that for some two hours an entirely new Katie walked about in good gas light and conversed freely, without Mr. Crookes ever suspecting that it was quite a different Katie from the one he had seen and talked to and photographed and scrutinized closely, more than a score of times, either in his own laboratory or at Mr. Luxmoore's. On the other hand, if it was Miss Cook who again enacted Katie, while the confederate remained apparently entranced in the cabinet, then we are faced with a still more serious difficulty, for on both occasions Mr. Crookes, being in the cabinet with the two together, remained there until lights were brought and the medium recovered consciousness.³³ This means that, while he actually

³²*Modern Spiritualism*, II, p. 154.

³³See the letters in *The Spiritualist*, quoted above, or Crookes's book, *Researches in Spiritualism*, pp. 104-112. The physical obstacles in the way of a sudden disappearance are emphasized in Mr. C. Blackburn's letter in *The Spiritualist*, May 8, 1874, p. 225. He describes the cabinet at Hackney.

stood within a yard or two of them, Miss Cook must have divested herself of her white "Katie" dress, have put on another dress with boots and stockings, etc., and have lain down in the place of the confederate, who meanwhile left the room by some secret means of egress. On May 21, the medium came out of her trance before Katie vanished, and Mr. Crookes records:

"For several minutes the two were conversing with each other, till at last Miss Cook's tears prevented her speaking. Following Katie's instructions, I then came forward to support Miss Cook, who was falling on the floor, sobbing hysterically. I looked around, but the white-robed Katie had gone. As soon as Miss Cook was sufficiently calmed, a light was procured and I led her out of the cabinet."

I quote this also to show that even in the darkness of the cabinet there was sufficient light for Mr. Crookes normally to be able to trace the whereabouts of the white dress. At any rate, he expected to be able to trace it.

4. There remains, therefore, nothing but what we may call the materialization hypothesis, and, as already stated, this seems to me, on the whole, to present the fewest difficulties. I should have liked to give some detailed account of the gradual development of Miss Cook's materialization phenomena at an earlier period; but it must suffice to quote a statement made by Dr. Gully, who had known her from the first.

"That the power grows with use was curiously illustrated by the fact that, for some time, only a face was producible, with, occasionally, arms and hands; with no hair, and sometimes with no back to the skull at all—merely a mask, with movements, however, of eyes and mouth. Gradually the whole form appeared—after, perhaps, some five months of séances—once or twice a week. This, again, became more and more rapidly formed, and changed, in hair, dress and color of face, as we desired."³⁴

³⁴Letter of J. M. Gully, M.D., dated July 20, 1874, printed in E. Sargent, *Proof Palpable of Immortality*, Boston, 1875, p. 54. Cf. *The Spiritual Magazine* November, 1872, p. 516, and *The Spiritualist*, May 1, 1874, pp. 205-208.

Let me add there were also sundry incidents recorded of Miss Cook which directly favour the materialization hypothesis. I have not enlarged upon them, partly for brevity's sake, partly because they are isolated phenomena which seem to need further corroborative testimony before they can be accepted with any confidence. But Mr. G. Tapp declared that once when, by accident, he violently clutched Katie's arm, "her wrist crumpled in my grasp like a piece of paper, or thin cardboard, my fingers meeting through it." Similarly, when Katie was photographed by Mr. Harrison in 1873, Katie soon after the magnesium flash "requested us to look at her, when she appeared to have lost all her body. She seemed to be resting on nothing but her neck." (See *The Spiritualist*, May 15, 1873, p. 203.) On the same occasion "a masculine right arm, bare to the shoulder," was thrust out of the cabinet when Katie was in full view. Again several witnesses declare that, shortly before her final disappearance, Katie cut many pieces out of her white robe and distributed them as souvenirs. Then, before the eyes of all, "she gave it one flap, and it was instantly as perfect as at first."³⁵

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that there were some suspicious happenings in Miss Cook's early career, and that in 1880, when she had become Mrs. Corner, an exposure of fraudulent practises took place from which her reputation never recovered. Moreover, at an earlier date, i.e., in 1873 and 1874, she was rather compromisingly associated with two very unsatisfactory mediums, Mrs. Bassett and Miss Showers.³⁶ Still, as has been previously said, this is no con-

³⁵*The Spiritualist*, May 29, 1874, pp. 258-259. Cf. Mr. Coleman's important article, *ibid.*, p. 235.

³⁶See *The Spiritualist* for April 1, 1873, p. 152, and May 15, 1874, p. 230. The exposure of Mrs. Bassett is recorded in *The Medium* for April 11 and April 18, 1873, pp. 174 and 182; that of Miss Showers in *The Medium* for May 8 and 22, 1874, pp. 294 and 326.

clusive proof that other phenomena were not genuine. Sir William Crookes, in particular, never varied in his belief of the reality of the phenomena he had observed. As late as 1916 he authorized the editor of *Light* to make it known that he "adhered to his published statements and had nothing to retract."

One further piece of evidence regarding Miss Florrie Cook after her marriage is too remarkable to be passed over in silence. It is a letter published in *The Spiritualist* for June 25, 1875, in the following form. The materialized figure then produced under Mrs. Corner's mediumship was called "Leila."

Materialization of Spirits in the House of Mr. Crookes

Mrs. Elgie Corner (Florence Cook) has favored us with the following interesting letter for publication.

20 Mornington Road, London, N.W.

June 20, 1875.

My dear Florrie — Great interest having been expressed as to the "Leila" materializations which have taken place through your mediumship at our house and elsewhere, I will with pleasure put down on paper some of the phenomena which have occurred under my own observation.

As the manifestations professed to be given for Mr. Crookes's information, most of the séances have necessarily been held here, but "Leila" has also appeared at three other houses. For the same reason my husband was at first almost constantly in the cabinet, and latterly he was allowed to go in and out as he liked; but it was by no means necessary for him to be present.

On several occasions we have all seen you and Leila at the same time. Once Leila and my husband were standing in the room with us talking, when you suddenly rushed out of the cabinet, pushed past them and fell insensible on the floor. Leila scolded Mr. Crookes for allowing you to leave the cabinet and disappeared. On another occasion you walked out in a trance, staggered about the room we were sitting in and then went back into the cabinet; as you entered the cabinet you held the curtain on one side and let us see Leila standing a few feet from us in her usual white robe. Several similar occurrences have taken place at other times.

I may add that on almost every occasion I have heard you cough, sigh, move about, or speak in the cabinet whilst Leila has been outside talking to us.

On two occasions Leila, whose feet were always bare, took one of your shoes off, and asked me to put it on her foot. I knelt down by her side, and tried my utmost to squeeze her foot into it, but found it impossible to do so, her foot being so much larger than yours. Leila has appeared at our house between twenty and thirty times, and tests of your separate identities were given almost every night. On some occasions visitors were present but we have had the best séances when you have been stopping with us as one of our family and no stranger whatever was present. Believe me, affectionately Yours

Ellen Crookes

Mrs. E. C. Corner

6 Bruce Villas, Eleanor Road, Hackney.

There cannot be a doubt that this letter was written by the wife of the distinguished Fellow of the Royal Society who was knighted twenty-two years later, in 1897. The address from which Mrs. Crookes writes, 20 Mornington Road, is the house at which the majority of the Katie King materializations took place in 1873-74. Although the letter was not sent to the editor of *The Spiritualist* by Mrs. Crookes herself, the subsequent issues of that journal contain no repudiation of its contents or protests against its publication. Neither is it easy to suppose that Mr. Crookes was unaware of what his wife had written. We may perhaps wonder that he left it to her to send the letter instead of bearing testimony to "Leila's" satisfactory test himself; but an explanation is probably to be found in the fact that the opposition and obloquy he had encountered had by degrees discouraged him from wasting more of his valuable time upon such investigations. We know at any rate, that he wrote to D. D. Home in the November of 1875: "I am so disgusted with the whole thing that were it not for the regard we bear to you, I would cut the whole 'Spiritual' connection; and never read, speak, or think of the subject again." He had not, however, lost faith

in the phenomena, for writing once more to Home nine years later, he stated "my belief is the same as ever, but opportunities are wanting."¹³⁷

With regard to the incidents just recounted, it is plain that if "Leila" scolded Mr. Crookes while Florrie had fallen fainting on the floor outside the cabinet, it cannot on that occasion have been true that Florrie was masquerading as Leila. Yet all this happened in the Crookes's own house, where surely it would have been impossible for any confederate to enact the part even once, let alone a score of times. I must confess that after reading very carefully the criticisms of Mr. Frank Podmore (both in his *Modern Spiritualism* and in his *Studies in Psychical Research*), of Professor A. Lehmann (*Aberglaube und Zauberei*, 3rd. ed., 1925), of Graf von Klinckowstroem (in *Der Physikalische Mediumismus*, 1925), and last but by no means least, of Mr. Serjeant Cox in *The Spiritualist*³⁸ and *The Medium*,³⁹ I still regard the theory of imposture on the part of Miss Florence Cook as the less probable explanation. That the whole business is mysterious and inexplicable to us with our present imperfect knowledge may be readily admitted. There seems, for example, every reason to believe that the intelligence which manifested itself in the very banal conversation of "Katie King" was none other than the intelligence of the medium herself.

Speaking of the materializations of another medium, Miss Showers, who was on some occasions associated with Florrie Cook, Mr. Serjeant Cox writes:

When Mr. Crookes tried with Miss Showers the ingenious electrical test invented by himself and Mr. Varley, it proved "Florence"

¹³⁷*Life and Mission of Home* (Ed Doyle), p. 218.

³⁸May 15, 1874, pp. 229-233; and June 5, pp. 272-274.

³⁹May 8, 1874, pp. 294-5; May 22, pp. 326-7; May 29, p. 342; July 10, pp. 435-6.

(the materialized figure) to be beyond doubt Miss Showers herself, precisely as by the accidental inspection of Mrs. Edwards she was seen to be by all the party at my house. When Mr. Crookes tried her by asking "Florence" to dip her fingers in some water which had the (to her) unanticipated effect of staining the fingers, the stain was found upon the fingers of Miss Showers!⁴⁰

Even were the fact of the staining of Miss Showers' fingers absolutely beyond dispute, I do not know that I should consider the incident quite conclusive. Col. E. A. de Rochas' *Extériorisation de la Sensibilité* supplies much matter for reflexion in this and similar cases. But while Mr. Crookes himself made no comment in *The Medium*, Sir Charles Isham wrote a fortnight later: "I hear from Mrs. Showers that Mr. Crookes told Miss Showers he could not detect any stains on that lady; neither could Mrs. Showers."⁴¹ As for the electrical experiment, Mr. Crookes denied in a letter to *The Spiritualist* (June 19, 1874) that he had committed himself to any explicit statement and declared that he had not had sufficient sittings with Miss Showers to come to a definite conclusion. What Crookes does state in the course of this communication seems to me worthy of very special consideration. Quoting from an earlier letter written to Serjeant Cox he says:

"I have had two experimental séances with Miss Showers, and have obtained certain results, but not enough to enable me to form a definite opinion. I must have more evidence. I have only had four séances altogether with her and that is quite an insufficient number. I had between thirty and forty séances with Miss Cook before I felt justified in coming to a positive opinion. I notice that with every new medium one or two séances only leave suspicion on the mind. It was so in the case of Home, Williams, Hearne, Miss Fox, Miss Cook, and Miss Showers. In all instances where a great number of séances have been available, this suspicion has been replaced by belief; so it is not fair

⁴⁰*Medium*, July 10, 1874, p. 435.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, July 31, 1874, p. 483.

to attach too much importance to the unfavourable impression given by the first few sésances with Miss Showers."

I have mentioned the name of Miss Showers (a medium summarily dismissed as fraudulent by Mr. Podmore) because in some of her materializations a peculiar test of genuineness is alleged to have been given. Perhaps the most serious difficulty which all must feel in reading Sir William Crookes's account of his experiences with "Katie King" arises from the very perfection of the manifestations themselves. On no occasion is there any record that the Katie, who presented herself thirty or forty times over before the eyes of Sir William in a good light, was in any way maimed or physically defective. She never appeared minus her lower limbs (as her reputed father, John King, is reported to have appeared at the sésances of Mr. Charles Williams) nor with features imperfectly modelled. None the less, she seems to have alleged, as a reason for her always showing herself with bare feet, that she thus economized the material (ectoplasm?) which would otherwise have been used up in providing her with boots and stockings.⁴² Curiously enough, no suggestion was ever made — at any rate none is mentioned — by Sir William Crookes or any of the other observers that the most conclusive proof which Katie could give of her spirit origin would have been an imperfect materialization. If she had occasionally appeared without an eye, with a half-formed ear, with only one arm, or even preferably with three, nothing could have demonstrated more satisfactorily that she was not Miss Cook or identical with any mundane impersonator of "Katie." There is, however, some evidence that in Miss Showers' mediumship, the materialized form was not always physically perfect. Mr. Charles Blackburn, a wealthy spiritualist from Manchester, gives an account of

⁴²*The Spiritualist*, March 1, 1873, p. 119.

a sésance at which he was present in the medium's home at Teignmouth. This location was so far unsatisfactory inasmuch as it suggests the possibility of confederacy or apparatus, but the nature of the phenomena seems to negative any use of trickery. One of the earrings which the medium wore was removed and a thread was passed through the hole and both ends were secured outside the cabinet in a place visible to all. After Miss Showers had lain down inside the cabinet and had fallen into a trance, a solid form, "Lenore," came out and was examined by those present. Mr. Blackburn writes:

"We all felt her ears, she had no boring whatever through her ears, and the lobes were very thin and far smaller than Miss Shower's. She had only one large toe to each foot; the other four toes were ossifications, and not toes at all. We all examined her very small feet with our hands and eyes; nor were we in the slightest mistaken. She told us her feet would have been perfected had there been more power. When this figure retired, we all went into the cabinet with faint light and awoke Miss Showers. She had the thread through her ear just as when she first lay down on the couch. We cut the thread close to her ear and traced it direct to the nail, without a knot or piercing in it. Miss Shower's feet, I need hardly say, are perfect, and were examined."⁴³

Miss Showers, the daughter of a General Showers, was not a professional medium; and certainly Mr. Charles Blackburn, whose name often figures among the psychic investigators of the period, could have no discreditable motive for giving false testimony. Curiously enough the other personality, "Florence Maples," who was also said to materialize under Miss Shower's mediumship, showed herself not infrequently with some similar physical defects. Mr. Stainton Moses, himself a medium, but a tutor at University College, London, and a man universally respected, gives an account of

⁴³*The Spiritualist*, August 21, 1874, pp. 87-88.

a séance with Miss Showers at Mrs. Gregory's house in Green Street, Grosvenor Square. The description of "Florence's" materialized form is too long to quote entire, but one or two points may be noticed. Mr. Moses speaks of "a cold clammy claw, rather than hand, which was stiffly jerked from the side." At first it was "unlike human flesh" but "it gradually acquired vital heat." Then he continues:

"Although the hands and arms are naturally formed and the body correctly shaped, the face never assumed a natural look, and during a part at least of the evening I believe that feet were wanting. I passed my foot under the figure which seemed to be off the floor and found no obstacle. I believe that no feet were there. The face presented throughout the evening a completely abnormal appearance. The complexion was pasty and like bad wax-work; the lips compressed so as to give an appearance of pain, and the glassy eyes, with their perpetual stare, gave the face a most unnatural look. I tried all in my power to make the eyes blink, but in vain. The whites were unnaturally large, and no eyelids were perceptible. The face was inhuman throughout the night, though at other times I have seen it look natural and pretty."⁴⁴

The account here given by Stainton Moses supplies rather an interesting illustration of the danger of drawing inferences from what is not explicitly stated. Almost inevitably one would conclude from the long description, of which I have quoted only a paragraph, that this figure, unlike "Katie," did not converse. He tells us that during the whole evening the form was in immediate contiguity to him. "I could touch it," he says, "at will." It sat down in a most peculiar way. "It simply *doubled up*, as if someone had touched a spring which caused it to bend." Not one word does the narrator record, as having been spoken by the figure. But it was certainly not an automaton, for Stainton Moses goes on to say:

"I felt the breath from the mouth, and I saw the chest rise and fall

⁴⁴*The Spiritualist*, April 3, 1874, pp. 162-163.

as breath was drawn. Moreover, as the figure stood touching me, by my side, I could feel the beating of the heart. There was apparently a fully organized body."

Fourteen people were present, including, I believe, Lord Rayleigh, F.R.S. Not all are named, but among those who are was the Rev. C. Maurice Davies, D.D., who contributed to the *Daily Telegraph* certain well-known articles on "Orthodox" and "Unorthodox London." His career is sketched in one of the Supplements to the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Another of the guests, Mr. T. Herbert Noyes, has also written some account of the séance. He agrees with the former narrator regarding the peculiar glazed appearance of the eyes and also in saying that the figure was some inches taller than the medium, while resembling her in feature. But Mr. Noyes tells us how "in answer to Col. Steuart's enquiries," the materialized figure told them that her parents' names were Joseph and Margaret Maples of Blackburn Street, Inverness, and that consumption had carried her off six years ago, also that "she wished a message to be sent to her parents relating to her deathbed scene."⁴⁵ She must, in fact, have talked a good deal.

Mr. Stainton Moses states: "I do not propose to offer any theory to account for the facts I have recorded. I have none; and I must see much before I care to frame one." Though more than half a century has passed since these words were written, the same attitude of reserve seems still to impose itself. The problem is only complicated by the unsatisfactory phenomena of Marthe Béraud (Eva C.) and others in more recent times. No sober critic can remain indifferent to the consideration which has been forcibly urged by Graf von Klinckowstroem in the *Dreimännerbuch*, and by others, that

⁴⁵*The Spiritualist*, March 27, 1874, p. 151; and cf. Col. Steuart's account in *The Medium*, April 3, 1874, pp. 214-215.

whereas in the seventies mediums abounded who were alleged to produce full-form materializations that spoke and could be handled, such phenomena are at present practically unheard of." On the other hand, it may be contended with some plausibility that the tests now imposed of rigorous searching, medical examination, reclothing, etc., create an atmosphere of suspicion which inhibits the development of that form of mediumship. In a passage quoted above, Sir William Crookes wrote: "I notice that with every new medium one or two sances only leave suspicion on the mind."⁷ May not the explanation very probably be that the mediums who produce such astounding phenomena are exceptionally sensitive. Even with Home, a sudden cry, a change of place, or some small excitement, was sufficient to bring the manifestation to an abrupt conclusion. In the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.* (Vol. IX, p. 310) Mrs. Crookes records how in the middle of a materialization she gave a frightened scream. "The figure immediately seemed to sink into the floor," and Mr. Serjeant Cox turned upon her with the words, "Mrs. Crookes, you have spoilt the finest manifestation we have ever had." Several similar examples could be quoted. If, then, the most remarkable phenomena seem always to be associated with occasions when all present are friendly and convinced and no control at all is exercised, there is at least the possibility of a legitimate explanation. It may be, of course, that at such times the unscrupulous impostor can fake his results unimpeded, but it may also be that in these conditions the medium's mind being absolutely tranquil, the spiritual influences which *ex hypothesi* control him have the fullest play. Automatists are agreed in declaring that they get the best results in their automatic script when they are

⁷Gulat-Wellenburg, *Der physikalische Mediumismus*, pp. 94-5 and 147.

⁸*The Spiritualist*, June 19, 1874, p. 296.

quietly engaged in conversation about some entirely different matter or at any rate are not attending to the script.

I cannot resist the temptation to insert here an experience of Sir William Barrett, first because I greatly sympathize with his point of view, when for instance he writes: "All psychical researchers need to bear in mind that every sensitive or medium is a *suggestible subject*; if you go expecting fraud you may possibly create the very fraud you suspect. If you make preparations beforehand to lay a trap for the medium, it is probable that both medium and experimenter will fall into the trap." But, secondly, the manifestations observed and recorded by such an experienced investigator with a medium of no great repute like Husk are in themselves of great interest. Sir William tells us:

"The only case of materialization witnessed by me, which seemed to be inexplicable by fraud, occurred with the medium, Husk, many years ago. It may be worth while describing this experiment as it has never been published.

"Mr. William de Morgan had kindly lent Myers and myself his studio in Cheyne Row, an almost bare room, furnished with a small deal table about three feet by five feet and a few chairs. After dinner Myers brought Husk to Cheyne Row in a hansom cab and we immediately sat round the table. There were six present including the medium. William de Morgan and his sister (being sceptics), were placed in control of the medium, whose feet were tied to the legs of the table, and his hands were grasped by the sitter on each side. Mrs. de Morgan (their mother) sat facing Myers, and I sat at the other end of the table and had control of the light. After the wrists of all present had been loosely joined together by silk thread, I blew out the candle and phenomena very soon occurred. The medium went into a trance; lights, very like fireflies, were seen darting about above our heads, movement by some objects in the room was heard and a deep guttural voice spoke to us calling himself 'John King.' In reply to our request he said he would try to show himself. A violent convulsion of the medium occurred, and suddenly right in front of me appeared a clothed human figure from the waist upwards—the lower part of

the body might have been concealed by the table. The face was illuminated by a bluish light which seemed to issue from an object held in the hand of the materialized figure. The face was undoubtedly a living one for I saw its eyes open and close and its lips move. I asked who it was and the guttural voice said 'John King.' It was a dark-bearded and rather unpleasant face, quite unlike that of the medium. I exclaimed 'Do you all see this figure? I am going to light the candle,' and immediately risked doing so. The figure vanished the moment the match was struck, and the medium was found in deep trance, lying back in his chair and groaning; when the medium had recovered he was sent home in a cab. On comparing notes each sitter described the face according to the different aspects it presented from his or her position at the table. We found upon experimenting that it was impossible to reproduce the figure by leaning on the table, nor could the medium have put on a mask as his hands were held the whole time and the tying of his legs and wrists was found intact. De Morgan asked Myers and myself to come the next morning and see if we could in any way imitate what we had seen. Though de Morgan remained somewhat sceptical, Myers and I both agreed that it was extremely difficult to explain the phenomena by trickery on the part of the medium, who, moreover, was found deeply entranced a few seconds later."⁴⁸

All those who took part in this experiment were people of marked intellectual distinction. Sir William Barrett, F.R.S., had first been Professor Tyndall's assistant, and then became Professor of Physics for thirty-seven years at the Royal College of Science, Dublin. F. W. H. Myers had won more prizes at the University than almost any other man of his generation. His published poems are as remarkable as his great psychological work on "Human Personality," unfortunately never completed. William de Morgan, the son of Professor Augustus de Morgan, was a famous artist, potter, and inventor before he became known in his declining years as a novelist of the very first rank. His mother was the au-

⁴⁸*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. XXXIV (1924), pp. 287-88

thor of a much-esteemed work *From Matter to Spirit* and his wife's artistic gifts were recognised as being on a level with his own. Professor Barrett and F. W. H. Myers had a wide practical experience in psychic research and were well acquainted with the tricks of fraudulent mediums. I should find it hard to believe that they were imposed upon by a clever piece of imposture.

Let us confess that the whole subject is infinitely puzzling. Having Mr. Feilding's report of the Naples sittings with Eusapia Palladino before our eyes, not to speak of numerous other séances held by Eusapia with her Italian fellow countrymen, it is difficult to maintain that a medium who notoriously cheats is incapable of producing genuine phenomena. For this reason the fact that "Dr." Monck, for example, was detected in flagrant and seemingly premeditated imposture, does not conclusively prove that all the materializations ascribed to him were equally fakes. The number of exposures which were recorded at that period make it hard to believe that any materializing medium was honest or trustworthy; but, on the other hand, the psychological mystery presented by the testimony of such a man as Dr. A. Russel Wallace, who shares with Darwin the repute of having given birth to our modern evolution theories, is not less embarrassing. Wallace, in his book of reminiscences entitled *My Life*, claims on four separate occasions to have witnessed materializations in a form which admitted of no dispute.⁴⁹ One of these experiences he described in some detail before judge and jury when giving evidence on oath in the *Colley v. Maskelyne* case (April, 1907). He stated that in full daylight on a bright sunny afternoon he saw a whitish cloud come out of Monck's side which was gradually built up into a draped

⁴⁹*My Life*, II, pp. 330-331.

female form standing clearly before his eyes, the two being five feet apart. Dr. Monck clapped his hands and the materialized figure also clapped hers, though more faintly. Then the figure drew near Monck again and was slowly reabsorbed into his body, as it had come out. Neither was this story devoid of indirect corroboration. The incident occurred at what were then the offices of a London spiritualist organization in Bloomsbury, for which Dr. Hensleigh Wedgwood, the learned author of the *Etymological Dictionary* made himself responsible. Now Russel Wallace assures us on Wedgwood's authority that in the course of a long investigation with Monck on these premises "they had had far more wonderful results than that just described." Anyone who may read the account given of Wedgwood in the *Dictionary of National Biography* will learn that he was throughout his life conscientious in an extraordinary degree. He resigned a post worth £800 a year because it involved the taking of an oath, and he regarded the taking of oaths as unlawful. But further, Archdeacon Colley, who was mainly instrumental in the exposure of Eglinton, another materializing medium, avers that with Monck he had an experience even more convincing than Dr. Wallace's, though it occurred not in the daytime, but in good lamplight. The Archdeacon and a friend who was with him (the name is given) were permitted to touch the materialized female form which had come, as before, out of Monck's side as a kind of vapour and had gradually solidified. Dr. Monck, still entranced, allowed the form to walk a few steps, supported on either side by the two observers. "Meanwhile," says the Archdeacon, "holding the hand of the spirit arm that rested on mine, I felt the wrist, palm, fingers and finger nails; yielding to pressure, having natural weight and substance and all things pertaining to humanity, but it was

damp and stone cold." The letter containing this statement was printed in *The Medium and Daybreak* for October 5, 1877 (pp. 625-6), and it purports to have been written on September 25, 1877, the very night of the occurrence. If this was an illusion it was an illusion of the most stupendous kind. Colley was a comparatively young man at the time and he was not then archdeacon — this title, in fact, was derived from South Africa — but his friends proclaim that he was incapable of deceit in such a matter.

Without pretending to reach any positive conclusion regarding the problem of alleged full-form materializations, I leave these statements for the consideration of the reader. They belong, it seems to me, to a quite different category to the evidence which attests the accordion phenomena of D. D. Home. But they serve, at any rate, to illustrate the uncertainty which besets even the best and most scientific investigations of the subject. Much curiosity is aroused, endless time is wasted, but in the end we are left no wiser than before.